

When Interruptions are God's Providence

1 Samuel 29-31

I. INTRO

- A. Greece; March 2020; Plans change...
- B. James 4:13–14, [13] Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit"—[14] yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. (ESV)
- C. Life is filled with interruptions
 - 1. Most are small and agitating (Trying to be productive while parenting)
 - 2. Some are frustrating, big enough to derail us for a season
 - a) Plans to do XYZ and then you get injured, sick, etc
 - 3. Others are huge, like running into a brick wall, and change your life
 - a) Diagnosis, death, birth, break-ups, financial ruin or windfall
- D. There is a biblical concept, however, called PROVIDENCE
 - 1. Providence combines two key things: God is in control & God is good
 - a) Romans 8 says that he is FOR YOU in all things
- E. We see interruptions, tragedy, and frustration... what does God see?
 - 1. Were his hands tied? Was he uncaring?
 - 2. We hear one part of the symphony, but we do not yet hear the orchestra
- F. Sometimes, what we see as derailing, distracting, a nuisance or not on our radar is a great blessing.
- G. When we are interrupted, do we have eyes to see and ears to hear what the Lord is doing?
- H. Do we genuinely believe that God is FOR US in all things, even the interruptions, delayed timing, and the ups and downs of life?

II. Chapter 29

- A. *1 The entire Philistine army now mobilized at Aphek, and the Israelites camped at the spring in Jezreel. 2 As the Philistine rulers were leading out their troops in groups of hundreds and thousands, David and his men marched at the rear with King Achish.*
 - 1. What is David thinking right now?
 - 2. For the last 16 months, David has been pretending to serve King Achish
 - a) He told him he was ransacking Judah when he was attacking the Philistines
 - b) He would leave no survivors
 - c) Basically, he was playing both sides
 - 3. I would be very curious to hear David's inner monologue
 - a) Is he wondering how he got into this mess?
 - b) Does he plan to switch sides in the heat of the battle?
 - c) Is he not worried about it at all?

4. Let's be honest, we can relate to David
 - a) I have made, am making, and will make stupid decisions
 - b) It wasn't with the greatest of wisdom that David went to King Achish, his enemy, in the first place, and now he is in between a rock and a hard place; He made his bed, now he has to lie in it
- B. 3 But the Philistine commanders demanded, "What are these Hebrews doing here?" And Achish told them, "This is David, the servant of King Saul of Israel. He's been with me for years, and I've never found a single fault in him from the day he arrived until today."

4 But the Philistine commanders were angry. "Send him back to the town you've given him!" they demanded. "He can't go into the battle with us. What if he turns against us in battle and becomes our adversary? Is there any better way for him to reconcile himself with his master than by handing our heads over to him?"

6 So Achish finally summoned David and said to him, "I swear by the Lord that you have been a trustworthy ally. I think you should go with me into battle, for I've never found a single flaw in you from the day you arrived until today. But the other Philistine rulers won't hear of it. 7 Please don't upset them, but go back quietly."

1. Commanders don't trust David (can't blame them), and they don't want him around
2. The king, however, has rose-colored glasses and still thinks David is his comrade at arms
3. Still, not wanting a mutiny, the king sends him out

C. 8 "What have I done to deserve this treatment?" David demanded.

9 But Achish insisted, "As far as I'm concerned, you're as perfect as an angel of God. But the Philistine commanders are afraid to have you with them in the battle. 10 Now get up early in the morning, and leave with your men as soon as it gets light."

11 So David and his men headed back into the land of the Philistines

1. David and his men are sent home.

D. **God's interruption is David's providential protection.**

1. God is moving David out of what WILL become a spiraling situation

E. What was David thinking here

1. Was he frustrated? Seems like it in v8
2. Why? God is making the decision for him

F. I think this is what we do sometimes, though

1. We encounter an interruption in our life (health, job loss, \$ issue, relationship break-up, etc) and rather than saying, "God what are we doing? Show me your way," we get frustrated and presume God's unkind
2. But God knows us far better than we know ourselves

3. God knows the future and all the potential futures and how they could unfold
4. God is providential → *“One of the oldest sayings of the ancient church summarizes the essence of the relationship between God and His people: Deus pro nobis. It means “God for us.” That is what the doctrine of providence is all about. It is God’s being for His people.” RC Sproul*
5. Providence means God is always FOR you in all things... even the interruptions, the lost jobs, the diagnoses, getting caught red-handed, etc
6. Your situation doesn’t undermine his goodness and providential plans

III. Chapter 30

A. Three days later, when David and his men arrived home at their town of Ziklag, they found that the Amalekites had made a raid... they had crushed Ziklag and burned it to the ground. 2 They had carried off the women and children and everyone else but without killing anyone.

3 When David and his men saw the ruins and realized what had happened to their families, 4 they wept until they could weep no more. 5 David’s two wives... were among those captured. 6 David was now in great danger because all his men were very bitter about losing their sons and daughters, and they began to talk of stoning him. But David found strength in the Lord his God.

1. David comes home to a big problem
 - a) Providentially, God was sending David home for a reason!
2. The families have been kidnapped, everyone is weeping, and now it smells like mutiny is on the horizon
3. But God is providential for David - he is **FOR HIM in all things**
4. Here we see a decisive turning point for David → found his strength in the Lord (this sounds like old David!)

5. God’s interruption was providential protection and redirection

B. 7 Then he said to Abiathar the priest, “Bring me the ephod!”... 8 Then David asked the Lord, “Should I chase after this band of raiders? Will I catch them?” And the Lord told him, “Yes, go after them. You will surely recover everything that was taken from you!”

9 So David and his 600 men set out, and they came to the brook Besor. 10 But 200 of the men were too exhausted to cross the brook, so David continued the pursuit with 400 men.

1. In the previous section, David argued with King Achish, but here David seeks the Lord
2. This is the first time we see David seeking the LORD in quite some time
3. Finally David is at the end of his human wisdom
4. He asks two questions: Should I go? Will I succeed?
5. I wonder how many pitfalls and traps we would avoid if we asked God for wisdom (James 1) instead of just stumbling around in the dark
 - a) King Achish, David never paused to say, “Lord is this from you?”

b) He pauses here and seeks the LORD

C. *11 Along the way they found an Egyptian man in a field and brought him to David. They gave him some bread to eat and water to drink. 12 They also gave him part of a fig cake and two clusters of raisins, for he hadn't had anything to eat or drink for three days and nights. Before long his strength returned.*

13 "To whom do you belong, and where do you come from?" David asked him.

"I am an Egyptian—the slave of an Amalekite," he replied. "My master abandoned me three days ago because I was sick.

1. Another interruption! Here David and his gang are racing to save their families when they stumble across a sick foreigner

a) Should they stop? Should they ignore him? What would the LORD have them do

b) Remember: **God is providential, he is FOR US**

c) That means the interruptions might be a blessing, not a curse

D. *14 We were on our way back from raiding the Kerethites in the Negev, the territory of Judah, and the land of Caleb, and we had just burned Ziklag."*

15 "Will you lead me to this band of raiders?" David asked.

The young man replied, "If you take an oath in God's name that you will not kill me or give me back to my master, then I will guide you to them."

1. Apparently, **God's interruption is a providential provision!**

2. They care for this Egyptian foreigner, and LO AND BEHOLD, he knows where the family is!

3. God has providentially dropped this inside guide in their lap

4. After being left behind by his master, the man has no love for the Amalekites

E. *16 So he led David to them, and they found the Amalekites spread out across the fields, eating and drinking and dancing with joy because of the vast amount of plunder they had taken from the Philistines and the land of Judah. 17 David and his men rushed in among them and slaughtered them throughout that night and the entire next day until evening. None of the Amalekites escaped except 400 young men who fled on camels. 18 David got back everything the Amalekites had taken, and he rescued his two wives. 19 Nothing was missing: small or great, son or daughter, nor anything else that had been taken. David brought everything back. 20 He also recovered all the flocks and herds, and his men drove them ahead of the other livestock. "This plunder belongs to David!" they said.*

1. There is a battle, a slaughter really

2. There is victory. There is plunder. They end up leaving with more than they had before they began

3. Despite the nerves, the fear, and the anxiety, we see that God was FOR David and his men all along

4. He interrupted them w/ King Achish, making sure they came home
5. He interrupted them with the Egyptian, providing provision and guidance
6. Now they are successful, and we realize God has interrupted them to bless them!

F. 21 Then David returned to the brook Besor and met up with the 200 men who had been left behind because they were too exhausted to go with him. They went out to meet David and his men, and David greeted them joyfully. 22 But some evil troublemakers among David's men said, "They didn't go with us, so they can't have any of the plunder we recovered. Give them their wives and children, and tell them to be gone."

1. Not everyone is happy. The worthless fellows don't want to share the plunder. They are forgetting that this whole thing happened b/c of God and not b/c of their strength. This was God's doing, God's providence, God's interruption, God's provision

G. 23 But David said, "No, my brothers! Don't be selfish with what the Lord has given us. He has kept us safe and helped us defeat the band of raiders that attacked us. 24 Who will listen when you talk like this? We share and share alike—those who go to battle and those who guard the equipment." 25 From then on David made this a decree and regulation for Israel, and it is still followed today.

26 When he arrived at Ziklag, David sent part of the plunder to the elders of Judah, who were his friends. "Here is a present for you, taken from the Lord's enemies," he said.

1. David realizes as much → he acknowledges that this is from the LORD
2. The blessing isn't just for David and his men, it is spread around
3. God seeks the good of all of his people → Providence!

IV. Chapter 31

A. Synopsis: The Philistines attacked Israel, and the Israelite army fled, leading to a great slaughter on Mount Gilboa. The Philistines killed King Saul's three sons—Jonathan, Abinadab, and Malkishua. In the midst of intense fighting, Saul was severely wounded by Philistine archers. Fearing capture and torture, Saul asked his armor bearer to kill him, but when the armor bearer refused, Saul took his own life. His armor bearer followed suit, and both died together.

With Saul, his sons, and his troops dead, the remaining Israelites fled their towns, allowing the Philistines to occupy them. The next day, the Philistines found Saul's body, decapitated him, stripped his armor, and displayed his body on the wall of Beth-shan. They also placed his armor in the temple of their goddess.

When the people of Jabesh-gilead learned of this, their warriors retrieved the bodies of Saul and his sons, burned them, and buried their bones under a tamarisk tree. They then observed a seven-day fast to honor them.

1. Saul experiences a different type of interruption → his untimely death

2. God is for his people, but you definitely don't want God to be against you
3. How many warnings did Saul ignore?
4. How many interruptions did he push past?
5. Instead of listening and trusting in the providence of God, Saul marched to the beat of his own drum. Saul walked a life of flesh, not faith
6. And now he reaps the consequences of it → his life, and his sons' lives, cut short

B. Meanwhile, David experiences prosperity, protection, provision... and it all began with **a Providential God at work in the interruptions!**

V. CONCLUSION

A. What is your attitude towards interruptions?

1. Do you get angry, grow frustrated, or bitter?
2. Do you rage out, fly off the handle, and scream?
3. Do you get anxious, resentful, or nervous - your heart racing?
4. Do you trust in God, seek him for wisdom, choose gratitude?

B. Psalm 112:6–8

*[6] For the righteous will never be moved;
he will be remembered forever.*

*[7] He is not afraid of bad news;
his heart is firm, trusting in the LORD.*

*[8] His heart is steady; he will not be afraid,
until he looks in triumph on his adversaries.*

C. When we were planning to move to SE Asia for missions, we were interrupted

1. Paperwork, canceled meetings, bad references
2. But God had a plan.
3. When we faced that interruption, rather than getting mad we asked, "Lord, what are you doing here?"
 - a) I wonder how much pain we could all avoid if we began with that rather than trying to claw our way back into our own plans
4. God prompted us, as we prayed and read, with something unexpected → planting a church in CMC
5. It wasn't our plan. It was God's interruption.
6. But God is good, providential, and works all things FOR US
7. He knows us better than we know ourselves (strengths and weaknesses)
8. He knows what medical problems we, or our kids, will face
9. He knows if us going somewhere would be bad or good for us

D. The question is: do you trust him? Do you trust this providential God, in the interruptions?

1. Do you believe that God is actually FOR YOU and not against you?
2. Do you believe that he has GOOD PLANS for you?
3. Do you believe that he can and will work through all things?

E. On this side of glory we will never truly understand

1. We don't know why we were delayed for work that one day by the tree that fell down in the road, or why we got sick and couldn't go on that business trip
 2. But one day I think we will look from the other side and be amazed at how God worked in and through the interruptions
- F. Don't try to understand things beyond you (Deut 29:29)
- G. ***Psalm 112:7 [The righteous man] is not afraid of bad news; his heart is firm, trusting in the LORD.***
- H. Like David, TRUST him in the interruptions, and ASK him what you should do
1. Trust him over your health, your wealth, your family, your government
 2. Trust him over all your safety nets
 3. He won't leave you or forsake you
- I. I think you will find that an attitude of gratitude, faith, trust, and joy is a much more rewarding path than anxiety, panic, nervousness, and frustration.
- J. God is a God of interruptions, but because he is a providential God (good and in control), his interruptions are always, ultimately, FOR US and NEVER against us